



Gordon Arnold in 1988

You've heard, perhaps, of the Umbrella Man, Black Dog Man, and Badge Man; but are you familiar with . . .

Nowhere Man: The Strange Story of Gordon Arnold

by Dave Reitzes

In the days, weeks, months, and even years following President Kennedy's tragic murder in Dallas, a number of individuals not initially identified as witnesses have come forward to bestow such status upon themselves. Some sound reasonable enough and are widely accepted as genuine eyewitnesses, even if their accounts add little to our understanding of that day's events; others make claims that can be harder to accept as authentic.

As author Richard Trask has observed:

There are numerous examples of various fakers, publicity seekers, and mentally imbalanced individuals who unfortunately often present themselves after the fact as legitimate spectators or even participants to history. With the development of rapid transportation and speedy communications, individuals can be at locations soon after a breaking news event or can at least quickly learn information about such events. In extreme cases one could fabricate a story, enabling him to fool others with passable knowledge of what actual witnesses did see.

The desire to be a part of exciting or historic events or to acquire a sense of importance can motivate people to say things that aren't true. Sometimes this may manifest itself in relatively innocent acts of exaggeration, as may be the case with statements *Dallas Morning News* reporter Hugh Aynesworth heard in the chaotic moments that followed the shooting of President Kennedy. Aynesworth, who himself was an eyewitness to the assassination, began talking to other witnesses immediately, scribbling down notes on the backs of some envelopes he happened to have with him. He recalls:

I remember interviewing people that said they saw certain things; some did, some didn't. Even then there were people making up things. Even then!

I remember interviewing a young couple where the guy was telling me that he had seen this and he had seen that, and his wife said, "You didn't see that! We were back in the parking lot when it happened!" Even then! And, of course, we've seen that in abundance since.

In rare instances, of course, people may indulge in behavior that fulfills the definition of a full-blown hoax.

Sensational photographs vanish?

One of the first cases of this type to emerge in the wake of the Kennedy assassination is that of photographer Norman Similas, a 34-year-old resident of Ontario, Toronto, who was in Dallas on the day of the assassination, covering the annual American Bottlers' Carbonated Beverages convention for the *Canadian Beverage Review*. Almost immediately Similas began claiming to have "witnessed from a distance of less than seven feet the assassination of President Kennedy" ("close enough to the car to have kicked the side of it"), from the south side of Elm Street, a "spot not far from the underpass." His account included any number of implausible elements, including the claim that during the shooting, a Secret Service agent ran up to the President's limousine, gun drawn, and opened the door, sending JFK "falling toward the pavement."

Similas also claimed to have obtained sensational photographs of the assassination, including a shot of the sixth-floor "Sniper's Nest" window of the Texas School Book Depository with two people visible inside, one of whom had been caught in the act of firing a rifle. Inspection of Similas's photographs failed to bear out such claims; in fact, while he had obtained numerous shots of crowd-lined streets and possibly portions of the motorcade, none of his photos showed any evidence of having been taken in Dealey Plaza at the time of the assassination.

Similas later claimed that his most important photos were unaccountably missing, but newsmen who interviewed him described him as evasive and unbelievable. One of these men, Associated Press day photo editor Ray Jefferies, who studied Similas's negatives and interviewed him the

day after the assassination, commented that Similas “probably cooked up the story to make a fast buck.” A thorough investigation led authorities to agree.

An unseen motion picture of the assassination?

In the wee hours of March 24, 1964, Duty Sergeant Patrick T. Dean received a collect call from Victoria, British Columbia, from a man who identified himself as Ralph Simpson. Simpson claimed to have been vacationing in Dealey Plaza at the time of the assassination and to have filmed the assassination from a vantage point that captured the Texas School Book Depository in the background. It was quickly determined that “Simpson” was actually one Ralph Henry William Smele, who admitted to Canadian authorities that he had never been to Dallas, had never had any film of the assassination, and had made the phone call to Dallas while watching television and drinking.

Sinister doings on the grassy knoll?

Another such episode began on December 5, 1966, when the Dallas Police Department received a long-distance telephone call from an individual identifying himself as Wilfred Baetz of New York City. In a letter of December 7 to the Dallas FBI, Police Chief Charles Batchelor reported that Baetz

stated that on November 22, 1963, at the time of the assassination of President Kennedy, he was standing on the grass on the north side of Elm Street — on the slope approaching the triple underpass. He recalls only one shot and that immediately after the shot he ran up the slope toward the railroad tracks and was stopped by an unknown police officer who pointed a pistol at him and shouted, “Where are you going?” He then returned down the slope. [He] stated that he could hear very little out of his left ear and that he heard the shot with his right ear and in his opinion the shot came from his right which was the direction of the railroad tracks. He also stated that he saw a puff of smoke come from behind the fence near the railroad tracks. He stated he was so excited he doesn’t recall any additional shots. He further stated that at the time of the incident, he did not reveal himself and had talked to no one regarding this until the recent publicity. He states that he revealed himself and made a statement to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in New York City.

Although Baetz had not contacted the New York City FBI, as claimed, the FBI investigated and identified Wilfred H. Baetz as a Bronxville, New York, resident with a colorful past.

Born in Darby, England, on February 13, 1911, Wilfred Henry Baetz had, by his own account, lived in the United States since childhood. He had served in the U.S. Army in 1941-42 and subsequently received a medical discharge. He had once enjoyed a career as a radio scriptwriter and singer. In 1943, Baetz had been responsible for composing such patriotic ditties as “Stand By America” and “You Buy ‘Em We’ll Fly ‘Em.”

Before the war's end, however, life for Baetz took a darker turn, as he embarked upon an arson spree that spanned at least seven years, resulted in several prison terms and at least one commitment to a mental hospital for observation, and was estimated by Boston police to have been responsible for "25 to 30 fires in Brookline, Allston and Brighton, Massachusetts."

Contacted by the FBI on December 21, 1966, Baetz admitted to his arson record, as well as "a couple of drunk arrests in Brighton, and Boston, Massachusetts." He stated that he had maintained no steady employment since suffering a heart attack two years earlier, had no children, and lived with his wife, Caroline, who was employed by the Time-Life Company. Researcher Debra Conway theorizes that Baetz's call to Dallas was triggered by a reading of the November 25, 1966, issue of *Life* magazine, which featured prominent coverage of the assassination's anniversary (possibly the "recent publicity" Baetz referred to in his phone call) and reports of evidence pointing to a possible grassy knoll gunman.

However, while it was confirmed that a twelve-minute call to the Dallas Police Department had been charged from Baetz's home phone number, Baetz denied placing the phone call to the Dallas Police Department. He told the FBI that "on November 22, 1963, the date of President Kennedy's assassination, he and his wife and his sister-in-law were at his residence and watched the details of the assassination on television. He stated that he was practically 'glued' to his television set for the next three days." He added that "he knows nothing concerning the assassination of President Kennedy other than what he has observed on television or read about," and suggested that someone must have charged the call to his home telephone as some kind of practical joke.

Another film of the assassination goes missing?

On December 5, 1963, a woman who refused to give her name phoned the Detroit office of the FBI and claimed that "she had taken 16 millimeter colored movies of the assassination" of President Kennedy, and that "these movies had turned out better than the pictures published in 'Life' magazine [from the Abraham Zapruder home movie]." She said she would "mail these movies" to the FBI's Detroit office. An FBI report notes, "This woman advised that she was a graduate student at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, working towards a Ph.D. degree. She said she is a State Department exchange student from West Berlin, Germany, and said that she was then leaving immediately for Germany. This unidentified woman also stated that she had a sister in Dallas that she had been visiting at the time of the assassination."

The FBI attempted to identify and locate the woman with the assistance of the International Institute of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Detroit office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, without success.

The same day the FBI received the anonymous phone call, a similar call was received by Robert Lubeck, Feature Editor of the *Detroit News*. The caller identified herself only as a “Mrs. Beck,” who said she was from Lincoln Park, Michigan, and a subscriber to the *Detroit News*. She said she had some 16 millimeter color “films of the assassination” taken from the overpass in Dealey Plaza, “which were better than the ones in ‘Life’ magazine.” She said she would deliver the film to the *Detroit News* personally.

If “Mrs. Beck’s” film existed, it would have been worth hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of dollars; but neither this incentive, nor any consciousness of the potential legal and historical importance of such a film, ever motivated “Mrs. Beck” to make good on her claims. Neither the FBI nor the *Detroit News* ever received any such film, and “Mrs. Beck” was never heard from again. An attempt to identify the *Detroit News* caller through subscription records failed. According to those who witnessed the assassination from the railroad overpass, there were no women in that area.

An assassination film deep-sixed by government agents?

Then there is the well-known story of Beverly Oliver, who began claiming in 1970 that she had filmed the assassination, but that her film had been confiscated from her and never returned. Researchers wondered whether she could be an unidentified woman seen in numerous films and photos who appeared to be filming or photographing the presidential limousine from extremely close range. Because of the scarf tied around her head, she had become known within the research community as the “Babushka Lady.”

Interviewed in 1971, Oliver “said she took a color movie at about where the ‘Babushka Lady’ was located but couldn’t pick herself out with any definiteness in . . . photos.” (Six years later, during a March 12, 1977, interview with representatives of the House Select Committee reinvestigating the assassination, Oliver was still unable to state whether or not the “Babushka Lady” in some Dealey Plaza photographs was her.) The next day, she said, she turned the “undeveloped film over to two agents who claimed to be federal, but who she said dressed like Texas Rangers.” She didn’t get their names or a receipt, and said she never saw film her film again.

“From the position that I was filming, I had the best shot of the assassination, and probably the only one that had a real good shot of the grassy knoll,” Oliver would later state. “And [there] probably would be a lot of unanswered questions answered if my film could be found.” FBI, CIA, and Secret Service records disclose no information whatsoever about the existence of any such film.

Oliver’s story later underwent any number of revisions, expansions, and embellishments. She initially claimed that she had filmed the assassination with a Super 8 Yashica movie camera; but the Super 8 camera was not marketed in the US until November 1965. Upon learning this Oliver began claiming that her camera had actually been an 8 mm foreign-made experimental model.

In sworn testimony years later, she [denied ever having identified the camera as a Yashica Super 8 model.](#)

The day her film was confiscated was revised from Saturday, November 23rd, to Sunday, November 24th, then finally to Monday, November 25th. The men “dressed like Texas Rangers” who had taken her film were later described as simply agents in plainclothes, whom she believed were either FBI or Secret Service; or as men who “showed me some cards and introduced themselves, I don’t remember their names, but they said they were from the FBI and the CIA . . .”

In the late 1980s Oliver began making the startling claim that she had seen an actual shooter on the grassy knoll. “I know where I thought the shots came from was the picket fence area around that large tree,” Oliver states in the British documentary series *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, “somewhere on the other side of those steps [indicating east of the steps leading to the pergola], but in the picket fence area. There was a figure there, and there was smoke there. I will always believe that the man that shot President Kennedy was standing somewhere in the picket fence area,” she adds somewhat incongruously, “and no one’ll ever convince me any differently.”

This was hardly the extent of her story, however. She also claimed to have been a close personal friend of Jack Ruby: “Jack was a very precious friend of mine,” she said. “I probably knew him as well as anyone on the face of the earth.” Yet, in all the thousands of available pages of statements and testimony from hundreds of Ruby associates and acquaintances, not a single one of them, friend or foe, mentions this heartwarming friendship between the 16-year-old beauty and the 52-year-old nightclub owner. On one occasion at Ruby’s Carousel Club, Oliver reported with a straight face, Ruby introduced her to a young man he identified as his friend, “Lee Oswald of the CIA.”

Oliver professed to have had a close friendship with stripper Janet Conforto, known professionally as Jada. According to Oliver: Jada had witnessed her meeting with Ruby and Oswald; she had spoken with Jada at the Carousel Club on the eve of the assassination; Jada told reporters about Oswald knowing Ruby; and the stripper soon mysteriously “disappeared.” Oliver kept silent about her story for so long, she said, because “I didn’t want to become a statistic” like Jada; “I didn’t want to become one of those people that shot myself in the back of the head with a shotgun.”

Actually, Jada [had not worked at the Carousel Club for nearly a month prior to the assassination.](#) She told reporters that, as far as she knew, [Oswald and Ruby did not know each other.](#) And she did not “disappear” or die mysteriously, but rather, [moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico.](#)

According to Oliver, another witness to her meeting with Jack Ruby and Lee Oswald was Carousel bartender Andrew Armstrong. Armstrong told the Warren Commission he had never seen Lee Oswald at the Carousel Club, and had never seen anyone who resembled Oswald.

Years after New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison made national headlines charging a New Orleans man named David Ferrie with involvement in the assassination (but not while Garrison's investigation into the assassination was still active), Beverly Oliver began claiming she had seen David Ferrie frequently at Jack Ruby's Carousel Club in 1963; that she had seen him there so often, in fact, that she had believed him to be an assistant manager of the club.

But David Ferrie lived and worked in New Orleans in 1963, and there is no evidence whatsoever that he made any travels to Dallas. On the contrary, Ferrie friend Layton Martens told author Gus Russo that between himself and three other friends, "one or more of us were at Dave's apartment [with Ferrie] practically every night that year."

When Texas resident Ricky Don White came forward in 1990 to claim that his father, Roscoe, had been an assassin on the grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza, Beverly Oliver supported White's story, "remembering" that she had [seen Roscoe White on the knoll](#) just after the shooting. The Ricky Don White story was quickly [unmasked as a fraud](#), one of the most notorious hoaxes in the history of the assassination inquiry. Later still, Oliver began claiming to have inside knowledge of an [assassination plot that she says took the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

Some common threads

Though to some degree it may be coincidence, certain motifs seem to emerge in the claims made by these individuals. There are the frequent and tantalizing allusions to grassy knoll assassins; unseen photographic evidence of the assassination, sometimes described as better or more important than the extant photos and films; and, of course, references to sinister or suspicious police officers or federal agents, shielding the area behind the picket fence on the grassy knoll from prying eyes, or confiscating evidence from hapless eyewitnesses.

If it is a reasonably simple matter, however, to dismiss the claims of Norman Similas, "Ralph Simpson," Wilfred Baetz, et al, it is still an indisputable fact that dozens upon dozens of spectators near the site of the assassination were never identified or interviewed by the local or federal authorities. Sooner or later, some of these witnesses are bound to come forward. If there is no solid evidence one way or the other, how is one to know if any of these latecomers is the genuine article or not?

Enter Gordon Arnold

In 1978, at a time when a House of Representatives Select Committee was stirring up public interest in JFK's murder, some members of a Dallas jury panel, during a break in proceedings, began discussing the assassination. One member of the group, Gordon Arnold, volunteered the

information that he had been an eyewitness in Dealey Plaza, but had never been interviewed by the authorities. His statements were brought to the attention of newsman Earl Golz, who first reported Arnold's tale in the *Dallas Morning News* of Sunday, August 27, 1978:

Gordon L. Arnold, [a] former Dallas soldier, said he was stopped by a man wearing a light-colored suit as he was walking behind a fence on top of the grassy knoll minutes before the assassination. Arnold, now an investigator for the Dallas Department of Consumer Affairs, was not called by the Warren Commission and has not been interviewed by the House Assassinations Committee.

Arnold said he was moving toward the railroad bridge over the triple underpass to take movie film of the presidential motorcade when "this guy just walked towards me and said that I shouldn't be up there."

Arnold challenged the man's authority, he said, and the man "showed me a badge and said he was with the Secret Service and that he didn't want anybody up there."

Arnold then retreated to the front of the picket fence high up on the knoll just to the west of the pergola on the north side of Elm Street.

AS THE PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE came down Elm towards the triple underpass, Arnold stood on a mound of fresh dirt and started rolling his film.

He said he "felt" the first shot come from behind him, only inches over his left shoulder, he said.

"I had just gotten out of basic training," Arnold said, "In my mind live ammunition was being fired. It was being fired over my head and I hit the dirt."

Arnold, then 22, said the first two shots came from behind the fence, "close enough for me to fall down on my face." He stayed there for the duration of the shooting.

His fence position, under the shade of a tree, may have locked away his story for 15 years as the Warren Commission and later other assassination researchers scanned photographs and movie footage of Dealey Plaza for witnesses to the shooting.

The first two shots that Arnold heard did not come from the Texas School Book Depository Building because "you wouldn't hear a whiz go over the top of your head like that." He said, "I say a whiz — you didn't really hear a whiz of a bullet, you hear just like a shock wave. You feel it . . . You feel something and then a report comes right behind it. It's just like the end of a muzzle blast."

He said he heard two shots, "and then there was a blend. For a single bolt action, he had to have been firing darn good because I don't think anybody could fire that rapid a bolt action."

“The next thing I knew someone was kicking my butt and telling me to get up.” Arnold said, “it was a policeman. And I told him to go jump in the river. And then this other guy — a policeman — comes up with a shotgun and he was crying and that thing was waving back and forth. I said you can have everything I’ve got. Just point it someplace else.”

ARNOLD TOOK his film from the canister and threw it to the policeman. “It wasn’t worth three dollars and something to be shot. All I wanted them to do was to take that blooming picture (film) and get out of there, just let me go. That shotgun and the guy crying over there was enough to unnerve me for anything.”

Two days later, Arnold was on a plane reporting for duty at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. He hadn’t given police in Dealey Plaza his name and never told his story to authorities, “because I heard after that there were a lot of people making claims about pictures and stuff and they were dying sort of peculiarly. I just said, well, the devil with it, forget it. Besides, I couldn’t claim my pictures anyway; how did I know what were mine?”

Arnold never was interviewed by the House Select Committee reinvestigating the case, but he told much the same story to author Henry Hurt in May 1982, adding, “If I could have dug a hole and crawled in, I would have, because there was more than one shot fired. It was like a crack, just like I was standing there under the muzzle. One shot went past my ear, and the other went over me.” “I thought they were shooting at me,” he said.

Interviewed by Jim Marrs in 1985, Arnold related his tale again, adding that he spoke briefly with the Secret Service agent a second time (after departing the area of the railroad bridge, “I could feel he was following me and we had a few more words”), and adding further details about his encounter with the two policemen: “One of them asked me if I had taken any film and I said yes. He told me to give him my film, so I tossed him my camera. I said you can have everything, just point that gun somewhere else. He opened it, pulled out the film, and then threw the camera back to me. All I wanted to do was get out of there. The gun and the guy crying was enough to unnerve me.”

Arnold is best known, however, for his appearance in Nigel Turner’s 1988 documentary series, *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* — the first and last time Gordon Arnold would be interviewed on film.

Over footage of the former soldier walking through the parking lot behind the stockade fence, Arnold says:

On that particular morning, what happened was I came downtown and I thought there was going to be a parade. So what I did, I parked my vehicle back here in this parking lot, and I

intentionally walked to this particular corner because I wanted to take pictures of the parade off of the railroad bridge.

Well, this is about as far as I got because what happened is when I got my leg to about this position [lifts his right leg over the steam pipe], a man came around the corner, off the bridge, had a suit on, and he turned around and told me I was not going to be there. And I guess I was younger and more spunky at that time because I told him, "You and who else is going to keep me off the bridge?" And he pulled out [an] identification card and said, "I'm with the CIA," and I said, "Well, that's enough muscle. I'll leave."

So I turned around and brought my leg back over like this, I walked down the fence line here, about halfway. And I was looking over the fence to see if I could get a good shot of the parade, and he come back up and told me, he says, "I told you to get out of this area." And I said, "Okay."

So I walked the complete length of the fence, got around on the other side. That's when I started to line up my frames so that I could take a picture of the parade. I had been panning shots through here so that I could get whatever was going to come down the street, and I saw that it was the President of the United States.

And as I was panning down in this direction, just as I got to about this position, a shot came right past my left ear, and that meant it would have had to have come from this direction. And that's when I fell down, and to me it seemed like a second shot was at least fired over my head. There was a bunch of report [sic] going on in this particular area at that time.

And what happened was that while I was laying on the ground, it seemed like a gentleman came from this particular direction [points behind him to the east]. And I thought it was a police officer because he had a uniform of a police officer, but he didn't wear a hat, and he had dirty hands. But it didn't really matter much at that time because, with him crying like he was, and with him shaking when he had the weapon in his hand, I think I'd have gave him almost anything except the camera because that was my mother's.

And literally what the man did was kick me, and asked me if I was taking a picture. I told him that I was. And when I looked at the weapon, it was about that big around, and I decided that I would let him have the film. I gave it to him, and then he went back off in this direction, I went off in this direction; three days later I was in Alaska, and I didn't come back to the United States for about eighteen months. . . .

The training that I had just finished, they were shooting live ammunition over us, and when a bullet goes past your ear and your eardrum feels like it's coming out the other side of your head, it's close. That's why I thought I was shot.

There's no doubt in my mind that I was there and it did occur.

Was Gordon Arnold really in Dealey Plaza? Did events occur as he described them?



Gordon Arnold demonstrates where he allegedly was standing as the assassination began

Was Gordon Arnold really in Dealey Plaza? Does any evidence confirm his presence there? Did events occur as he described them? Was he consistent in his recollections?

To attempt to answer these questions, let's walk through the events described by Gordon Arnold more or less chronologically.

The agent behind the fence

It was while walking along the rear of the fence just a few minutes before the assassination that Arnold claimed to have encountered the agent in plainclothes. In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, Arnold specified that he encountered the agent just as he was climbing over the steam pipe at the edge of the lot, momentarily straddling it. Researcher Paul Burke observes that this is the same pipeline Officer Seymour Weitzman testified he burned his hands on just a few minutes after the shooting. Burke has a point; if Weitzman's testimony is accurate, Arnold should have received some memorable burns in a most sensitive area of his anatomy.

How did the agent identify himself, according to Arnold? In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, the man is alleged to have stated, “I’m with the CIA.” But in all previous accounts, the man is identified as a Secret Service agent. In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, the man is said to have “pulled out an identification card.” But Arnold told Earl Golz and Henry Hurt it had been a *badge*.

Why did Arnold obey the agent’s wishes? In the earlier accounts, the agent identifies himself as a Secret Service agent, someone whose job it would be to protect the President of the United States. It only “seemed logical to Arnold,” Hurt tells us, that such an individual might want to restrict access to certain sites overlooking the parade route. The Golz and Hurt narratives neither state nor imply that Arnold felt in any way threatened or intimidated by the agent, despite Arnold’s claim (in 1982) that the man was “wearing a side arm” — a detail present in the Hurt account but no other.

In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, however, it’s not Secret Service “logic” but rather CIA force that persuades Arnold. Once the man identified himself as a CIA employee, Arnold says, his reaction was: “Well, that’s enough muscle. I’ll leave.”

There were, it must be noted, two Dallas police officers assigned to keep outsiders off the railroad overpass, but no federal agents of any kind.

In his 1985 interview with Jim Marrs and 1988 interview for *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* (but not the 1978 Golz and 1982 Hurt accounts), Arnold described two separate confrontations with the plainclothes agent, the first right off the railroad bridge, and the second occurring when the agent followed him through the parking lot and insisted he leave the area behind the stockade fence completely.

Interestingly, only a short time before Arnold’s alleged incident, Associated Press photographer James Altgens had walked through the same parking lot in search of a vantage point from which to photograph the motorcade. No one approached him or asked him to leave the area.

Arrival on the knoll

Arnold said he then walked around the fence and “stood on a mound of fresh dirt” in order to film the motorcade. There was no mound of dirt there, however; rather, there was a park bench, and there were two people sitting on that bench eating their lunches. By the time Arnold came forward with his story, the bench was no longer there, which may explain its absence from his account.

The “mound of fresh dirt” is important, though, because if Arnold had ever stood on the grassy knoll (whether in 1963 or later), he should have been aware that it would have afforded a terrible view for filming the motorcade. While Arnold claimed to have been filming prior to the time the shots were fired, his view of the President would have been largely obscured by road signs, the

many spectators lining Elm Street, and, for a brief time, the concrete wall a short distance in front of him. Only once JFK had traveled halfway down Elm Street — to the approximate position of the limousine at the time of the fatal head shot, in fact — would Arnold have had a clear view of him.

Abraham Zapruder, the garment manufacturer who would take what is widely considered the most important film of the assassination, initially intended to film from the knoll, but was unable to find an unobstructed view of the street there. The best vantage point Zapruder could find was a four-foot-high concrete pedestal some twenty feet or so east of Arnold's alleged position, and even this view was completely blocked at one point by one of the larger street signs in the area.

Arnold at least partially acknowledged these problems during a 1982 interview with Gary Mack. According to Mack, Arnold said he had initially planned "to brace himself by the tree but wound up walking some short distance away as the president neared. He described to me how he watched the traffic and planned out how he would film JFK. He said the [Stemmons Freeway] sign would have blocked his view briefly, so he planned to start filming as soon as Kennedy appeared after the sign."

But this makes no sense; the first shot that struck President Kennedy was fired no later than the instant Kennedy came into Abraham Zapruder's comparable view, and some believe it was fired even sooner. If what he told Gary Mack was true, Arnold would have had no time at all to film before the shooting began.

Confrontation after the shooting

Arnold initially claimed to have had film of the motorcade confiscated by two police officers, one of whom was crying and waving a shotgun. It should be borne in mind that, by his own account, at no point during this alleged confrontation did it occur to him that the police officers might have had anything to do with the shots that had been fired. It seems strange, then, that Arnold, who had shown such willingness to challenge the authority of the alleged agent "wearing a side arm" behind the stockade fence ("You and who else is going to keep me off the bridge?"), should fail to ask these alleged policemen, "Why are you harassing *me*? The shots came from *right there behind the fence!*" (It is worth pointing out, as well, that Abraham Zapruder filmed the entire assassination from just a few yards east of Arnold's alleged location, yet no one tried to seize his film.)

There is something else that Arnold didn't think to ask the policemen, or apparently anyone else, for that matter. Recall that Arnold stated specifically that he "automatically hit the ground" just as the shots began. "I buried my head in the ground and heard several other shots," he said, "but I couldn't see anything because I had my face in the dirt."

Following his encounter with the two officers, Arnold told Henry Hurt, he “went straight home;” according to Jim Marrs, “Arnold ran straight back to his car and drove out of the parking lot unchallenged.” He identified himself to no police officers or other authorities, and never mentioned having spoken to any bystanders in Dealey Plaza.

As upsetting as his alleged encounter may have been, it seems striking that, judging from his own account, he did not bother to ask a single person at the scene: “What happened? Has the President been shot?” Wasn’t he even the slightest bit concerned or curious about what had happened?

When *did* he learn that JFK had been murdered? How did he feel when he heard the news that afternoon that the shots were believed to have been fired by one man, and not from the knoll, but from the Book Depository? How did he feel ten months later when a blue-ribbon presidential commission reached the same conclusion? Was he not the slightest bit inclined to come forward and “set the record straight?” All accounts of his story are silent about these issues.

Film-flam

If Arnold’s story is true, a question arises as to who removed the film from his camera. In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, Arnold states that he turned his film over to a man wearing a police uniform, but *not*, he specifies, the camera itself: “I think I’d have gave him almost anything *except the camera*,” he said, “because that was my mother’s.” (Emphasis added.) Likewise, Arnold told Earl Golz in 1978 that he himself “took his film from the canister” and threw it to the policeman.

But in his 1985 account to Jim Marrs, Arnold says that the police officer “told me to give him my film, so I *tossed him my camera*. I said *you can have everything*, just point that gun somewhere else. *He opened it, pulled out the film, and then threw the camera back to me.*” (Emphasis added.)

Of course, if Arnold truly felt “threatened” by these policemen (“It wasn’t worth three dollars and something to be shot. All I wanted them to do was to take that blooming picture [film] and get out of there, just let me go.”), it’s curious that he would be so worried about his mother’s camera.

Seeing double

This brings us to another striking aspect of Arnold’s account in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*. The Golz, Hurt, and Marrs accounts are in complete agreement that Arnold encountered two separate policemen: one who kicked Arnold and demanded that he get up but did not brandish a weapon, and another who was crying and waving around a long gun (specified as a shotgun in the Golz account).

For example, Arnold told Earl Golz in 1978:

“The next thing I knew someone was kicking my butt and telling me to get up.” Arnold said, “it was a policeman. And I told him to go jump in the river. And then this other guy — a policeman — comes up with a shotgun and he was crying and that thing was waving back and forth. I said you can have everything I’ve got. Just point it someplace else.”

Likewise, Arnold specified to Jim Marrs in 1985 that “one of them” (one of the two policemen) demanded his film.

This is not the case in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, however, in which Arnold describes being accosted by a *single* police officer:

And what happened was that while I was laying on the ground, it seemed like a gentleman came from this particular direction. And I thought it was a police officer . . . But it didn’t really matter much at that time because, with him crying like he was, and with him shaking when he had the weapon in his hand . . . And literally what the man did was kick me, and asked me if I was taking a picture. I told him that I was. And when I looked at the weapon, it was about that big around, and I decided that I would let him have the film. I gave it to him, and then he went back off in this direction . . .

Further modifications

Arnold’s interview in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* also adds two new details to his description of the individual (or, according to his earlier accounts, the second of two individuals) who accosted him on the knoll. To Earl Golz, Arnold had simply described this man as “a policeman;” in Henry Hurt, he was a “second policeman.” But by the time of Arnold’s appearance in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, he seems to have developed some doubts about the man’s occupation: “I *thought* it was a police officer [emphasis added] because he had a uniform of a police officer, but he didn’t wear a hat, and he had dirty hands.”

He didn’t wear a hat, and he had dirty hands.

This description appears in none of Arnold’s earlier accounts, but it’s reminiscent of two items of evidence with which he may have become familiar by the time he was filmed in 1988.

Joe Marshall Smith

The first item consists of statements by Dallas police officer Joe Marshall Smith, who had described to the Warren Commission encountering a man on the grassy knoll immediately after

the shooting who displayed the identification of a Secret Service agent. To Earl Golz in 1978, Smith said, “I remember one thing, he kind of had dirty looking hands or dirty fingernails it looked like.” Golz printed this in the same August 27, 1978, *Dallas Morning News* article that introduced Gordon Arnold to the world. Note that the man with “dirty looking hands” was not a man in a police uniform, however, as in Arnold’s story, but a man Smith believed to be a Secret Service agent.

Smit’s description of this alleged agent also bears scant resemblance to Arnold’s Secret Service (or CIA) agent behind the stockade fence. While Arnold’s agent dressed in a “light-colored suit” and was “wearing a side arm,” the man described by Smith “looked like an auto mechanic. He had on a sports shirt and sports pants. But he had dirty fingernails, it looked like, and hands that looked like an auto mechanic’s hands.”

It’s hard to escape the impression that Arnold was simply mixing and matching elements from various stories he had heard or read — and there can be little doubt that Arnold had read Smith’s story in 1978.

Enter “Badge Man”

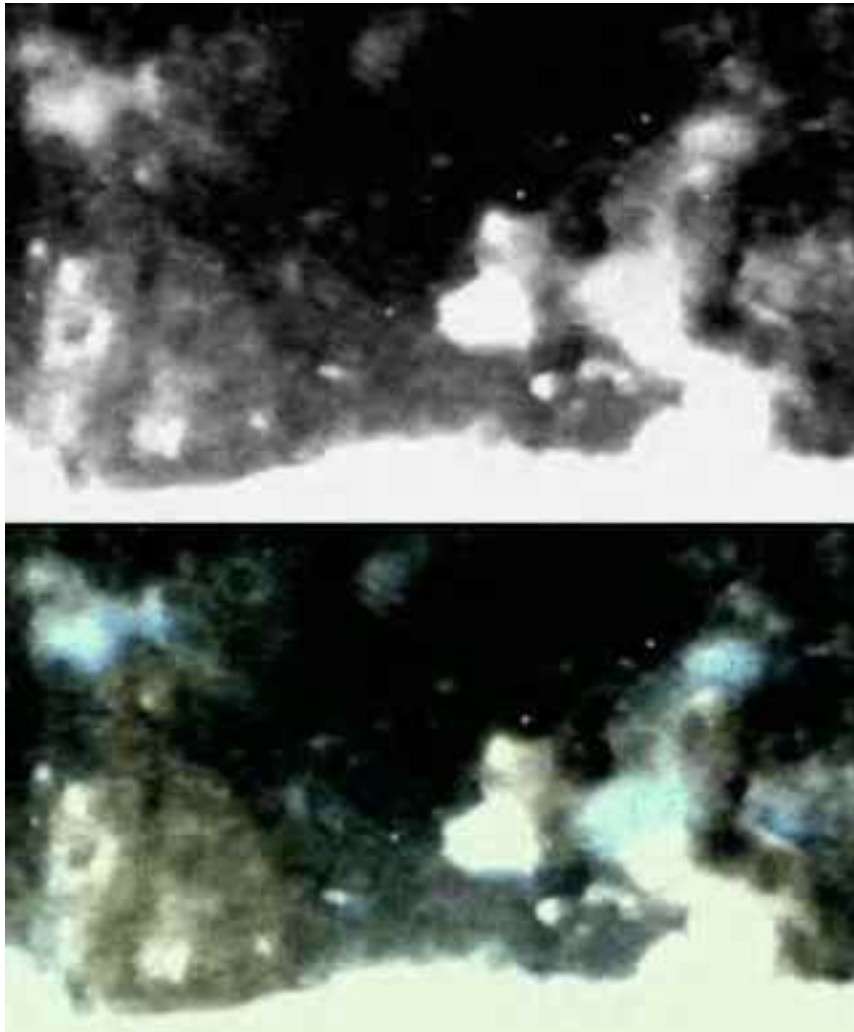
The second item of evidence that may have influenced Arnold’s story is an image discovered by Texas researcher Gary Mack in October 1982, in an “exceptionally clear” second-generation transparency slide copy of a print of Mary Ann Moorman’s Polaroid photograph of John F. Kennedy’s assassination that author Josiah Thompson (*Six Seconds in Dallas*) had obtained in the 1960s from United Press International. The image seemed to depict the head and shoulders of a man behind the stockade fence, in a stance possibly consistent with the firing of a rifle, his face partly obscured by a white image that could be interpreted as a muzzle flash or smoke from a rifle.

Enlarged and enhanced by photo-optics technician Jack White, the image yielded more apparent details. While this theorized man did not appear to be wearing a hat or cap, what was said to be his chest and arm seemed to contain images reminiscent of a badge and insignia, not unlike those worn by a police officer. Mack dubbed the image “Badge Man.”

After subjecting the enlargements to further scrutiny, Mack and White discovered a less clearly defined image near “Badge Man” that they thought could be Gordon Arnold. Shortly thereafter, Mack reports, he conducted three telephone interviews with Arnold, during one of which, Mack says, “I told him I had a photograph that *may* show him [emphasis as in original], but I didn’t want him to see it until I was certain I had obtained the clearest possible version.” Arnold’s filmed interview for *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* took place in the summer of 1988, Mack notes, and, according to Mack, “it truly was the first time he [Arnold] had ever seen *any* version of the Badge Man blowups.”

Is it possible that, contrary to what Gary Mack believes, Arnold had seen or heard about the “Badge Man” image, published by Mack in 1982, prior to his filmed interview for *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, and it was this development that inspired the new description of the police officer as one who was wearing “a uniform of a police officer,” but “didn’t wear a hat”? Another element of Arnold’s evolving story suggests this may well have been the case.

In addition to the “Badge Man” and alleged Gordon Arnold images in the Moorman enlargements, Mack and White discovered a third image, which they believed to be a man wearing a hardhat and white T-shirt standing directly next to the “Badge Man” figure — a particularly troublesome claim given the fact, acknowledged by both Mack and White, that “Badge Man” and friend would have to have been elevated several feet above the ground (for example, standing on the bumper of a car) in order for their chests to be seen over the five-foot-high fence from Moorman’s vantage point, as Mack and White believed.



“Badge Man” and friends, as envisioned by Gary Mack and Jack White

When shown a color-tinted version of a Moorman enlargement created by White and Mack, purportedly for the first time, one of Arnold's reactions was to ask someone off-camera (presumably director Nigel Turner), "Would this fella back here [the figure with the hardhat] be the railroad man I asked you about this morning? Because when I was walking to the site, and I had never told anybody that I had, when we were out there filming, it reminded me that there was a railroad worker just standing out there by the railroad tracks."

So in his interviews for *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, Arnold has subtracted one of the two policemen from his earlier accounts, specified for the first time that the man (or one of the men) wearing a police uniform was bareheaded, and added a railroad worker who plays only a passive role in his story.

If these interviews were conducted, as both Nigel Turner and Gary Mack state, before Gordon Arnold became aware of the hypothesized contents of the Mack/White Moorman enlargements, it would indeed be remarkable that his 1988 account suddenly fit so perfectly what Mack and White believed to be shown in Mary Ann Moorman's photograph.

Can we be as certain as Turner and Mack that Arnold's recollections were untainted by any knowledge of what Mack and White had discovered, published, and publicized within the Kennedy assassination research community?

Exit "Badge Man"

Regardless of whether one accepts Gordon Arnold's story, however, does the Moorman Polaroid corroborate his presence on the grassy knoll that tragic day?

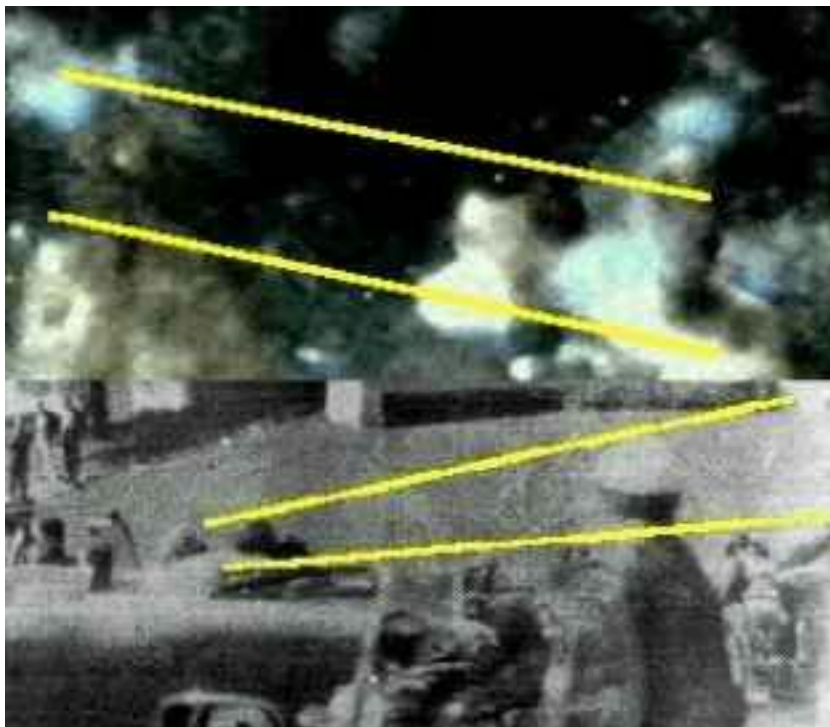
In a word, no.

The simple fact of the matter is that, if the images in the Moorman enlargements were indeed Gordon Arnold and a man in a police uniform ("Badge Man"), as Mack and White believe, a distance of about ten feet would have separated the two — about the same distance that separated President John F. Kennedy from Dallas police officer Robert W. "Bobby" Hargis at the exact same instant, as depicted in the Zapruder film.



At left: eyewitness Jean Hill in red, Officer Bobby Hargis, Mary Moorman about to snap her picture

Officer Hargis is also prominent in Mary Moorman's Polaroid: look at the obvious disparity between the relative size of the President's head compared to that of Hargis, and that of the alleged figure of Gordon Arnold compared to that of Mack and White's "Badge Man," though each pair of figures would be located approximately the same distance apart.



Simply put, while either Mack and White's "Badge Man" or "Gordon Arnold" figure could conceivably depict an actual human being on the knoll, it is impossible for *both* to be people. Of

course, if either one of these images is nothing more than an illusion, it raises serious questions about the validity of both.

As researcher Greg Jaynes points out, the features of the “Badge Man” image are remarkably well defined, while the edge of the white concrete wall, located some thirty-seven feet *closer* to the camera than the theorized position of “Badge Man,” is captured in Moorman only as a sea of gauze and fuzz; the same criticism applies to the “Gordon Arnold” and “Hardhat Man” figures. Of course, it is a photographic impossibility for objects *further* from the plane of focus of the photograph to be in sharper focus than objects *nearer* to it; this strongly suggests that the three images are illusions resulting from photographic artifacts, light glimpsed through the trees in the background, distortions resulting from an [object located in between Moorman’s camera and the picket fence](#), or a combination of some or all of these factors — just like other “assassins” found in Mary Moorman’s grainy Polaroid and eventually debunked by analysts, including Gary Mack himself.

Furthermore, Gordon Arnold stated consistently that he dropped to the ground just after the *first* shot was fired; but the first shot was fired no later than the time frame 224 of the home movie taken by Dallas garment manufacturer Abraham Zapruder was exposed, and very possibly as early as Zapruder frame 155. If Arnold’s account is accurate, how can he still be standing at the time of the head shot (captured in Zapruder frame 313, about the same time the Moorman Polaroid was taken)?

Finally, if Gordon Arnold’s story is true and the Mack/White “Badge Man” theory is also true, where was “Badge Man” just a few minutes earlier, when Arnold was allegedly behind the fence?

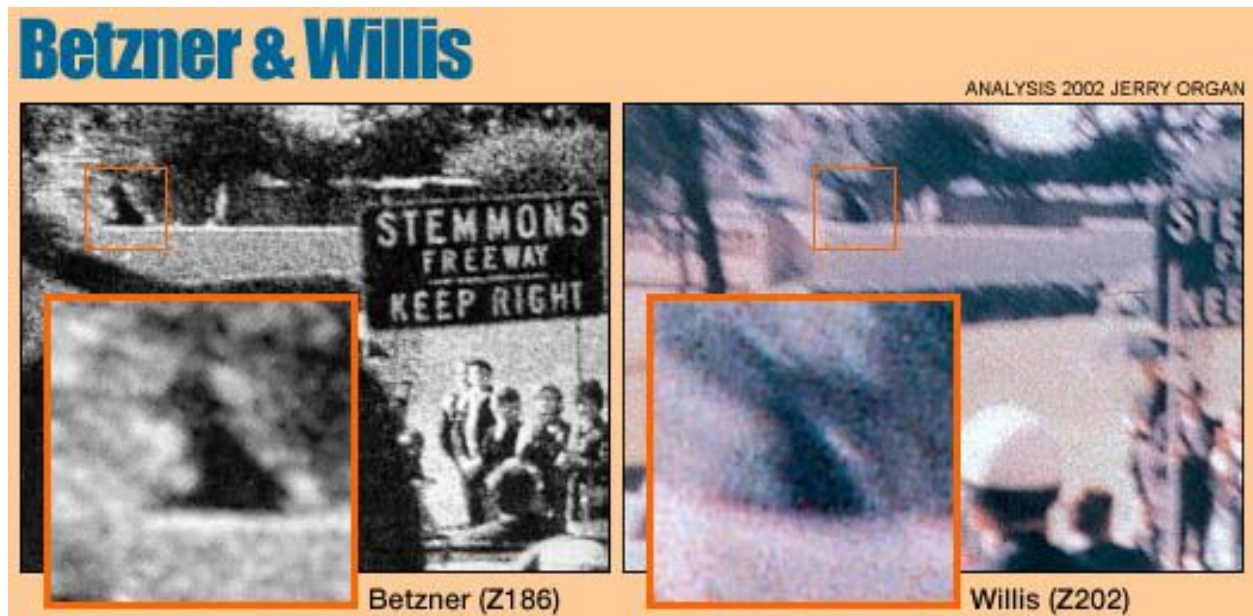
Arnold consistently stated that he had been “walking behind [the] fence on top of the grassy knoll minutes before the assassination” toward the railroad bridge. After his purported encounter (or encounters) with the federal agent, Arnold “walked the complete length of the fence,” this time in the other direction, before he got around on the other side. We know that the President’s motorcade was running some five minutes behind schedule. If a man in a police uniform was supposed to kill the President from behind the fence on the grassy knoll, where was he?

Enter “Black Dog Man”

As far as photographic corroboration for Arnold’s story goes, the only issue that remains is whether or not he could be the figure known as “Black Dog Man.”

“Black Dog Man” is the name given to a bystander glimpsed hidden in shadow behind the concrete wall in photographs taken by spectators Phil Willis and Hugh Betzner; the description comes from the silhouette’s slight resemblance to a black dog crouched upon the wall. As this person has never identified him- or herself, and his or her features are far too indistinct in these

photographs to allow for any possible identification, his or her identity remains open to speculation.



Exit “Black Dog Man”

“Black Dog Man” cannot be Gordon Arnold, however, as he or she appears to be standing against the wall (see below), while Arnold claimed to have been standing a short distance across the sidewalk from the wall; and “Black Dog Man” certainly does *not* appear to be filming the motorcade.



Left: researcher J. Gary Shaw demonstrates “Black Dog Man’s” position for Robert Groden.

Right: Gordon Arnold stands where he claimed to have been positioned during the assassination.

Eyewitness corroboration for Arnold’s story?

Despite the dearth of evidence, there is one eyewitness who has been alleged to confirm Gordon Arnold’s presence in Dealey Plaza.

Faces in Odd Places

If one looks at enough photographs, faces can turn up in all kinds of strange places. Consider, for example, this [photo of the World Trade Center towers](#) in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Some see the face of Satan, perhaps gloating over the evil he has caused.

Then there is this famous [photo of the “face on Mars.”](#) photographed by NASA's Viking Orbiter in 1976. How did it get there? Does it show intelligent life, perhaps trying to communicate with other races from other planets?

As it happens [a probe in 2001](#) obtained a much higher resolution photo of the same area, and the “face” is shown to be a [rather ordinary geological structure](#).

It's not possible, unfortunately, to go back to Dealey Plaza and rephotograph “Badgeman.” If he was ever there, he's now long gone.

As noted previously, Arnold's story was first publicized in a *Dallas Morning News* story of August 27, 1978. A follow-up story of Sunday, December 31, 1978, again authored by Earl Golz, noted, "Some assassination researchers said they doubted Arnold's story because they could not find him in photographs and movie film taken at the time of the assassination."

However, Golz wrote, Arnold's "presence on the grassy knoll was confirmed Saturday by former U.S. Sen. Ralph Yarborough of Texas, who was riding in the motorcade two cars behind the presidential limousine. He was a passenger in a car with Vice President Lyndon Johnson and Mrs. Johnson."

"Immediately on the firing of the first shot I saw the man you interviewed throw himself on the ground," Yarborough told *The News*. "He was down within a second of the time the shot was fired and I thought to myself, 'There's a combat veteran who knows how to act when weapons start firing.'"

Yarborough elaborated slightly upon his statement ten years later, in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*:

During that shooting my eye was attracted to the right. I saw a movement and I saw a man just jump about ten feet like at the old time flying tackle in football and land against a wall. I thought to myself, "There's an infantryman who's either been shot at in combat or he's been trained thoroughly: the minute you hear firing, get under cover."

Yarborough saw someone "jump about ten feet like at the old time flying tackle in football and land against a wall;" Gordon Arnold said he "hit the dirt" *behind* the concrete wall.

Gordon Arnold said he was in uniform that day; Yarborough *surmised* that the bystander he saw was an infantryman or combat veteran, because he appeared to know "how to act when weapons start firing."

Was Yarborough describing Gordon Arnold, or someone else entirely?

In 1993 Ralph W. Yarborough was interviewed at his Austin home by historian David Murph of Texas Christian University. Murph reminded Yarborough that he had been quoted as saying he had witnessed a man on the grassy knoll throw himself down on the ground, and that the man had impressed him as a combat veteran.

Yarborough seemed puzzled to hear that his words had been applied to someone standing on the grassy knoll. That couldn't possibly be correct, he insisted repeatedly. "Remember where I was in the motorcade — with the Johnsons," he cautioned Murph, "too far back to have been able to see anyone [on the knoll] drop to the ground when firing began."

Whoever Yarborough had described (and there were many people in Dealey Plaza throwing themselves down on the ground as the shots rang out), it could not have been Gordon Arnold.

What really happened on the knoll during the assassination? Does any evidence corroborate Gordon Arnold's claims about what occurred during and after the shooting?



**Newsman cover the knoll area in the seconds following the shooting
(Photo by Frank Cancellare)**

The thing that is so obviously problematic about Gordon Arnold's story is that if he really did have the dramatic confrontation he described with the men in police uniforms (or one man, according to Arnold's account in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*), it is an indisputable fact that no one ever reported witnessing it, and none of the many photographs of the knoll area taken in the moments following the assassination depict it.

On November 22, 1963, Lee E. Bowers, Jr., was a signal operator for the Union Terminal Railroad Company, working out of the railroad's north tower, located a short distance behind the stockade fence overlooking the grassy knoll, elevated some fourteen feet above ground level. In *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, Gary Mack claims Lee Bowers as a corroborative witness for Gordon Arnold's story. Mack notes that Bowers testified to the Warren Commission that there were two men behind the stockade fence, near where Mack and Jack White place "Badge Man" and the man with the hardhat in White's enlargements of Mary Moorman's Polaroid.

However, Bowers's description of the men is at odds with the Mack/White interpretation of the images in Moorman. Neither man described by Bowers wore a police uniform, for example; Bowers said "there were two men. One man, middle-aged, or slightly older, fairly heavy-set, in a white shirt, fairly dark trousers. Another younger man, about mid-twenties, in either a plaid shirt or plaid coat or jacket."

Modelling the Trajectory

Dale K. Myers is an expert in computer animation who has done a [meticulous analysis of the photographic evidence](#) on the “Badgeman” issue. It’s an example of what you get when you bring real expertise, rather than buff enthusiasm, to the topic.

“Were they standing together or standing separately?” Warren Commission counsel Joseph Ball asked him. “They were standing within ten or fifteen feet of each other, and gave no appearance of being together, as far as I knew,” Bowers replied. After the shooting, Bowers observed, at least one, possibly both of the men remained in the area as police and bystanders began flooding into the parking lot.

These two men were the only strangers Bowers noticed in the area. If his testimony is to be believed, he did not see a man fitting Gordon Arnold’s description walk toward the railroad bridge; he did not see anyone fitting the description of a plainclothes officer or agent in a suit; he did not witness a confrontation between two such individuals; he did not see a man fitting Arnold’s description walk back along the fence; he did not witness a second confrontation between the two individuals, in the same approximate area as the two men Bowers *did* describe; he did not see a police officer behind the fence prior to or immediately after the shooting; he did not see a man wearing a hardhat (a la Mack and White) standing behind the fence; he did not see anyone fire a gun; he did not see a weapon of any kind; and he saw no one flee the area. He simply

heard three shots and could not tell which direction they came from.

Just prior to the shooting, two motorcycle policemen who had preceded the presidential limousine briefly slowed their cycles and waited for the slow-moving limousine to catch up with them. One was Officer Stavis “Steve” Ellis, who had just driven past the grassy knoll and turned around to face the President. “If there had been any shots fired from the grassy knoll,” Ellis would state, “I couldn’t have missed it since I was right even with that area when the shots were fired.”

Ellis recalled:

During the shooting, my back or, more accurately, my left side was turned to the grassy knoll, but I was never more than about 100 feet from the spot where someone is supposed to have fired. Just an instant before, nobody was standing there, and I didn’t see anyone approaching. If a shot had come from that close to me, I would have known it. There was no shot fired from the grassy knoll. There were three shots fired, and all three came from back up toward the School Book Depository.

Motorcycle Officer William G. “Bill” Lumpkin had also turned around to face the President at the time the shots rang out. He recalled:

At the time [the shots were fired] I was facing east on Elm with the grassy knoll to my immediate left, and the corner of the stockade fence was less than 100 feet away. I saw nothing on that hill that looked in any way suspicious. I’m absolutely positive that there were only three shots, that they all came from back up Elm Street from the right rear of the President’s limousine, and that no shot was fired from the grassy knoll.

Officer James Chaney was riding a motorcycle only a few feet from the presidential limousine’s right rear fender, close enough for his uniform to be spattered with the President’s blood after the fatal head shot; Officer Douglas L. Jackson rode a motorcycle just to Chaney’s right. A shot from the grassy knoll would have come from the right of both men and passed directly in front of them. In a diary entry the evening of the assassination, Officer Jackson wrote, “I knew that the shooting was coming from my right rear [towards the Book Depository] and I looked back that way . . .”

“You did not see the person who fired the shot?”
Officer Chaney was asked by ABC newsman Bill Lord
within hours of the shooting. “No, sir,” Chaney
replied, “it was back over my right shoulder.”

Directly across the street from the grassy knoll were
bystanders Charles Brehm, his five-year-old son, Mary
Ann Moorman (who took the famous Polaroid picture
of the assassination) and her friend, Jean Lollis Hill; a
little to the west stood Associated Press photographer
James Altgens, amateur photographer Richard
Bothun, and spectator Malcolm Summers; then Jack
Franzen with his wife, Joan, and their young son Jeff.

Moorman, Brehm, Hill, Altgens, Bothun, Summers,
and the Franzens shared the best view of the grassy
knoll of any eyewitnesses as the shots were fired.
They had different impressions of where the sounds
were coming from (for example, Charles Brehm
thought the shots came from one of the buildings at
the corner of Elm and Houston, while Jean Hill
thought they came from the knoll), but none of them
saw anyone fire at the President, none of them saw
anyone on the knoll with a weapon, and none of them

reported seeing anything even remotely like the confrontation Gordon Arnold later described.

Emmett J. Hudson was employed by the Dallas Parks Department as the groundskeeper in Dealey Plaza. Hudson had witnessed the assassination from halfway down the colonnade steps on the knoll, only a few yards from the corner of the four-foot-high concrete wall near where Arnold is supposed to have been. From this position, Hudson would hardly have been able to miss the young soldier, had he actually been there.

Yet, in a reference to amateur filmmaker Abraham Zapruder, Warren Commission counsel Wesley Liebeler asked Hudson if he had noticed anyone near him with a camera filming the assassination, and Hudson had not. Neither did he observe any dramatic occurrence on the knoll, such as the one described by Arnold. "I did look around but I did not see any firearms at all," he stated in a sworn affidavit dictated within hours of the shooting. He heard three shots and believed they came from high and behind the limousine.

Two eyewitnesses, Abraham Zapruder and his secretary, Marilyn Sitzman, had an elevated view of the area behind the wall where Gordon Arnold claimed to have been, only a few yards away. Prior to the shooting, Zapruder had mounted a four-foot-high pedestal overlooking the knoll area in order to gain a suitable vantage point from which to capture the motorcade with his home movie camera. As he suffered from vertigo, he asked Sitzman to stand behind him on the pedestal and help steady him while he filmed.

Neither Zapruder nor Sitzman ever described anyone resembling Arnold in any of their statements, although Sitzman did recall two other people in that area. As she described to investigator Josiah Thompson, “there was a colored couple. I figure they were between 18 and 21, a boy and a girl, sitting on a bench, just almost, oh, parallel with me, on my right side, close to the fence.” The bench was located almost precisely where Arnold would later describe himself as having stood. “And they were eating their lunch, ‘cause they had little lunch sacks, and they were drinking Coke. The main reason I remember ‘em is, after the last shot . . . I heard a crash of glass, and I looked over there, and the kids had thrown down their

Coke bottles, just threw them down and just started running towards the back.”

“Now,” Thompson asked her, “to get to this area between the stockade fence and the cement abutment, or small mall: Did you turn after the shot to look in this general area?” “Yes,” she said. “And did you see anyone in this area?” “No,” she replied, “just the two colored people running back.”

Sitzman’s recollection of the couple eating lunch is supported by a photograph discovered by Richard Trask, showing two men examining a paper bag and food wrappers on the bench behind the concrete wall. Visible in Jim Towner’s last photograph is a glass bottle perched upon the concrete wall, right in front of the bench, apparently left there by one of the young people described by Sitzman.



[Click here to see the entire photograph](#)

When asked many years later by researcher Gus Russo about the possibility that someone had been shooting at the President from the knoll area, Sitzman replied, “That’s absurd. I was only a few feet away, and I didn’t hear or see anything suspicious.” After the shooting, in fact, Sitzman immediately informed Sheriff’s Deputy John Wiseman that the shots had come from the Book Depository, not the knoll.



**The view of “Badge Man’s” location from Abraham Zapruder’s pedestal
(Photo by Kim Reinholt)**

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur John Chism had been watching the motorcade with their three-year-old child from the north side of Elm Street, near the Stemmons Freeway street sign. They both had the impression that the shots came from behind them, in the area of the concrete pergola in between the grassy knoll and the Texas School Book Depository. Mrs. Chism turned to look behind her, “but I couldn’t see anything.”

“My wife and I began seeking cover,” Mr. Chism said. As captured in photographs by *Life* magazine staff

photographer Art Rickerby, “seeking cover” meant running directly past the corner of the concrete wall, behind which Gordon Arnold would later claim to have had his upsetting confrontation. Neither of the Chisms ever reported anything unusual occurring there.



The Chisms (left) run for cover

Riding a motorcycle off the left rear fender of the presidential limousine was Officer Robert W. “Bobby” Hargis; riding to Hargis’ left was Officer Billy Joe Martin. When he heard the first shot, Martin testified, “I looked back to my right . . . At the building on the right there [the Book Depository].” He couldn’t tell for certain where the shots had come from.

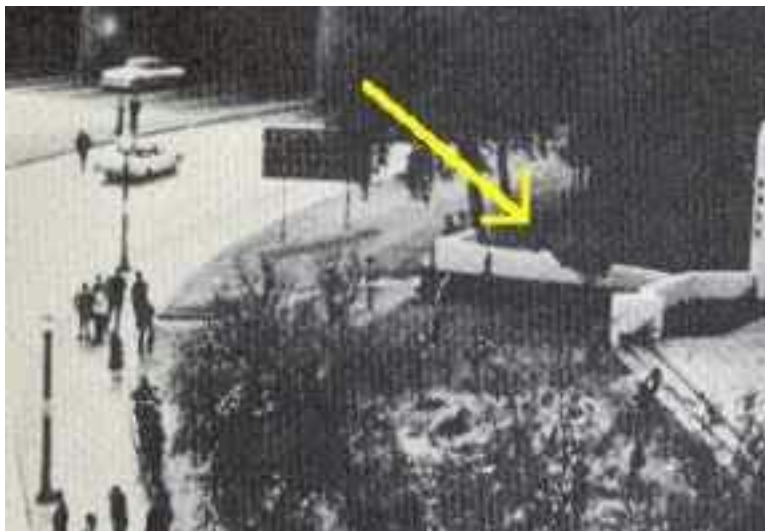


Officer Robert W. “Bobby” Hargis

Officer Bobby Hargis abandoned his motorcycle and quickly scanned the windows of the Book Depository. “I knew [the shots came from] high and from the right,” he related soon after the shooting. “I looked for any sign of activity in the windows, but I did not see anybody.” Unsure of what to do, he ran up the knoll, past the corner of the wall where Arnold is alleged to have been, towards the overpass. (As a motorcycle officer, of course, Hargis carried no shotgun.)

Warren Commission counsel Samuel Stern asked Hargis, “Did you observe anything then on the overpass, or on the incline, or around the Depository?” Stern asked him. “Anything out of the ordinary besides people running?” “No; I didn’t,” Hargis replied. “That is what got me.”

Looking down on the knoll area were three employees of the Texas School Book Depository — Harold Norman, Bonnie Ray Williams, and James Jarman, Jr. — who had been watching the motorcade from the southeast corner of the Depository’s fifth floor when they heard the shots. They had a clear view of the area behind the concrete wall, but didn’t observe anything occurring there. In fact, they would testify that the shots came from directly over their heads.



The view of Gordon Arnold’s alleged position from the “Sniper’s Nest” window of the Book Depository

The three men subsequently ran to the west side of the building, “Curious to see why everybody was running that way,” as Harold Norman put it. Norman recalled for the Warren Commission, “We saw the

policemen, and I guess they were detectives, they were searching the empty cars over there,” in the parking lot behind the picket fence. Bonnie Ray Williams said, “We saw the policemen and people running, scared, running — there are some tracks on the west side of the building, railroad tracks.” “We wondered why they were running that way.” As James Jarman put it, “officers and various people was running across the tracks, toward the tracks over there where they had the passenger trains, and all, boxcars and things.”

None of the three ever reported a police officer or anyone else with a rifle or shotgun on the knoll, and none ever mentioned seeing a police officer or officers accost a bystander in that area.

Young married couple Bill and Gayle Newman and their two little boys, Billy and Clayton, were watching the motorcade from the north side of Elm Street, a short distance east of the pergola steps and concrete wall. When the shooting began the Newmans threw themselves down on the ground, shielding the children. They both thought the shots came from behind them, possibly from the pergola area between the grassy knoll and the Texas School Book

Depository — not because of the sound of the shots, Bill Newman would later recall, but because of what he “visually saw: the President going across the car and seeing the side of his head come off. The sound played little factor.” The Newmans never did see anyone suspicious in the knoll area.

21-year-old Jean Newman (no relation to Bill and Gayle) was watching the motorcade from slightly further east on Elm Street. When the shooting began, she said, she “looked around to see if I could see anything, but I saw no one whatever with anything that resembled a gun or anything of that kind.” She told the FBI that “she immediately turned and looked up the hill to the north toward the parking lot but did not see anything . . .”

Back on Houston Street, several cars behind the President’s limousine, was the vehicle designated Camera Car 1, the first of three cars loaded with professional news photographers and motion picture cameramen. NBC cameraman Dave Wiegman began filming as the car approached the turn to Elm Street, while the shots were still being fired. Wiegman leaped from the vehicle, continuing to film, and ran around the corner. Unable to see the President, his attention

was drawn to the figure of Bobby Hargis, who had just dismounted his motorcycle and begun running up the knoll. “I figured he knows something’s up there, so I ran up there,” Wiegman recalled. 🗨️

Wiegman found himself alongside Secret Service agent Thomas Lemuel “Lem” Johns, who had leaped from the car following Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson’s limousine at the start of the shooting and attempted to catch up with the Vice-President’s slow-moving vehicle. (When the cars in the motorcade suddenly sped up following the abrupt departure of the President’s limousine, Johns was momentarily stranded in Dealey Plaza.) Wiegman saw Bill and Gayle Newman on the ground, but otherwise “I saw nothing up there” on the knoll, he would recall. “Lem was sort of looking around,” Wiegman observed, but “Couldn’t see anything.” Spying nothing else of interest in the area, Wiegman began filming the Newmans.


Analyzing the
Bond Photos

Don Roberdeau has carefully analyzed a key set of photos from Dealey Plaza, those shot by Wilma Bond. The Bond photos, like those analyzed by Dave Reitzes in this essay, not only [fail to corroborate Arnold's story](#), but contradict it at key points.

Immediately behind Wiegman were two other cameramen from Camera Car 1, Thomas Craven of CBS and Thomas Atkins, a Navy photographer assigned to the White House. Craven had jumped from the car just after it made the turn to Elm Street; he followed Officer Hargis and Dave Wiegman up the knoll. “I saw the Newmans,” Craven recalled, “that’s when I started running — when I saw them lying on the ground. . . . I guess we scared the hell out of that family as we started taking pictures of them. We made pictures of everything that was moving.”

Tom Atkins was right behind, motion picture camera ready, trying to “find a scene to shoot.” The only thing he could see of interest was “that mother and father and kids” — the Newmans — “and I started to shoot that.”

Directly behind Camera Car 1, a second car bearing five professional photographers (Camera Car 2) made the turn onto Elm Street just after the shots ended. United Press International’s Frank Cancellare, known to his friends as “Cancy,” was the first in the vehicle to react. As the Associated Press’ Henry Burroughs remembered, “We came up to the scene of the shooting and people were running all over the place. Cancellare got out there and there was a policeman running, as I recall, up the hill and Cancy followed him . . .”

Also following Officer Hargis up the knoll was AP photographer James Altgens, “thinking perhaps if they had the assassin cornered I wanted a picture, but before I had gotten over one-quarter of the way up the incline, I met the officers coming back and I presumed that they were just chasing shadows, so to speak, because there was no assassin in the area apparently . . .” Altgens then took a “good look” around the area,  but, as he would relate in his Warren Commission deposition, the only noteworthy sight on the knoll were the Newmans: “I noticed the couple that were on the ground over here with their children, I saw them when they went down and they were in the area and laid there some time after the Presidential car had disappeared. . . . I looked at them and they weren’t hit by a bullet, so I took another long look around before I started my dash back to the office . . .”

Another occupant of Camera Car 2, official White House photographer Cecil Stoughton, would recall, “As we rolled to a stop just around the corner, Cancellare leaped out of the car and ran to take a picture of a family cowering on the grass. Tom Atkins was already there shooting his 16mm Arriflex, and instead of doing likewise, I slipped on my 150mm lens on the Hasselblad and shot one frame . . .” from inside the car. 🗨️

Stoughton’s photograph depicts Tom Craven and Tom Atkins with their cameras pointed at the Newman family. Behind them, captured in clear, crisp focus by Stoughton’s lens, is the concrete wall behind which Gordon Arnold would claim to have had his unsettling encounter. In Stoughton’s photograph there is very obviously no one standing behind the concrete wall or anywhere near it.



Stoughton and Burroughs remained in the car, as did Art Rickerby and *Dallas Morning News* photographer Donald Clinton “Clint” Grant, both of whom snapped several photographs of the knoll area from inside the

vehicle. Although their car was passing directly in front of the concrete wall, the only subjects they seem to have found worthy of photographing were the Newman family, Frank Cancellare (in the process of photographing the Newmans), and photographers Atkins and Wiegman, now running to catch up with their car again.

Wilma Irene Bond, a bookkeeper at the nearby Justin McCarty Manufacturing Company, had viewed the motorcade from a spot alongside Houston Street, facing away from Dealey Plaza. She didn't know where the shots came from, but snapped the first of six photographs of the knoll as people began to converge upon that area. Located dead center in the frame — only a few yards from where Dave Wiegman, Tom Atkins, and Jim Altgens can be seen standing — is the corner of the concrete wall, just behind which the purported confrontation described by Gordon Arnold is supposed to have taken place. No one is visible there.



In Dave Wiegman's film and in the background of Tom Atkins's film, the motorcycle of Officer Clyde Haygood can be seen approaching the scene. Wiegman, Atkins, Altgens, and Officer Haygood, still astride his cycle, can all be glimpsed in the background of a photograph taken by civil engineer James Towner, who had watched the motorcade from the corner of Elm and Houston. Just beyond Haygood and the others can be seen the corner of the concrete wall; if anyone is behind it, one cannot tell.



Officer Haygood had been on Main Street approaching Houston when the shots began. As he turned the corner to Elm, he “could see all these people laying on the ground there on Elm. Some of them were pointing back up to the railroad yard, and a couple of people were headed back up that way, and I immediately tried to jump the north curb there in the 400 block, which was too high for me to get over. . . . And I left my motor on the street and” — passing the wall where Gordon Arnold’s encounter ostensibly took place — “ran to the railroad yard.” (Like Hargis, Haygood had no shotgun.)



Officer Clyde Haygood prepares to search the knoll in these frames from Malcolm Couch's film

What did Haygood find? "Well, there was nothing," he would testify. "There was quite a few people in the area, spectators, and at that time I went back to my motorcycle . . . which was sitting on Elm Street."

Haygood's dash to the underpass was captured in the background of several photographs, including Wilma Bond's second photograph of the knoll and another picture snapped by bystander Phil Willis. Also clearly visible in both images is the corner of the concrete

wall; no one can be seen behind it. Approximately thirty seconds had passed since the shots were fired.



In the moments that followed, Wilma Bond snapped three more exposures that show the corner of the concrete wall. By the last of these, a handful of spectators can be seen beginning to follow Officer

Haygood up the knoll. “The people were running helter-skelter here and there,” witness Charles Brehm would recall. “They were running up to the top of that hill it seemed to me in an almost sheep-like fashion following somebody running up those steps [possibly the young, black couple described by Marilyn Sitzman]. There was a policeman who ran up those steps also. Apparently people thought he was chasing something, which he certainly wasn’t. There were no shots from that area, but some of the people followed him anyway.”

Apparently, no one noticed anything unusual going on behind the concrete wall; and no one can be seen in that area in any of Bond’s images.





Several of Wilma Bond's photographs show the first press bus rolling down Elm Street. On that bus *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* photographer Harry Cabluck snapped three pictures through a window. His second

image captures very clearly the entire length of the concrete wall; no one can be seen behind it.



Cabluck's photo also captures a man in a suit (above left) who may be *Dallas Morning News* reporter Kent Biffle, a passenger in the car behind the press bus. "Nobody knew what was happening at that point," Biffle would later recall; but believing the shots had come from the knoll area, Biffle headed in that direction. "Some teenagers followed," he said. "One of them darted ahead and hit the fence before I did. I remember thinking, 'This nutty kid is going to get his head blown off and he's not even getting paid for it.'" "He just vaulted over that fence," Biffle said, recalling how he quickly followed suit. "He shamed me into doing it." "Puffing, I followed him." They never did

find an assassin, however. Nor did Biffle see anything unusual on the way up the knoll or on the way back.

As the shots ended Camera Car 3 was approaching Elm Street and the Texas School Book Depository. KRLD cameraman James Underwood, WBAP cameraman James Darnell, and *Dallas Morning News* photographer Thomas Dillard jumped from the vehicle and began photographing the events unfolding around them. As the car approached the triple underpass, the two remaining passengers, *Dallas Times Herald* photographer Robert Jackson and WFAA cameraman Malcolm Couch, told the driver to stop, and both ran back to the knoll area. The films of Underwood, Darnell, and Couch all captured lasting images of the knoll, but no corroboration for Gordon Arnold's story.

Bystander Jay Skaggs, who had run towards Elm Street after the shooting, snapped a photograph of the knoll from a position close to that of Wilma Bond. By this time a number of people had begun to walk towards the railroad overpass, but no one can be seen near the corner of the concrete wall. According to Skaggs, approximately one minute had passed since the shots were heard.



As more spectators followed Officer Haygood up the knoll, Jim Towner snapped a photograph showing people beginning to run behind the concrete wall. If anything suspicious was going on in that area, no one seems to have noticed.



During that time the knoll had been a constant focus of attention for the eyewitnesses closest to it, for the Dallas police officers whose responsibility it was to establish what had occurred in the area and restore order, and for the newsmen responsible for, and whose livelihood depended upon, capturing the most newsworthy events unfolding around them. Few seconds passed without a professional or amateur photographer recording the scene.

Yet, if Gordon Arnold's story is true, no one took notice of a soldier being robbed at gunpoint in broad daylight by two police officers, one of whom was crying; and none of the numerous photographers present captured Arnold or his confrontation with the police officers on film.

Who speaks for Gordon Arnold?

Gordon Arnold passed away on October 15, 1997, but Gary Mack and Jack White continue to argue for his credibility. Mack points out, for example, that Arnold's apparent absence in the photographic evidence is hardly proof that Arnold wasn't there. Jack White disagrees, however. "I am not sure we can count on

any of the photos to be untampered [*sic*],” White has stated. “If Arnold’s story is true, then some photos must be false. That is, Arnold and policemen were removed.”

Mack and White have each argued that Arnold did not tell his story to gain publicity for himself, and was in fact quite reluctant to come forward. “He is a very shy man and never sought to have his story made public,” White says. Mack points out that Arnold gave his initial account to Earl Golz believing his identity would remain confidential. Golz confirmed this to Henry Hurt in 1982, “explaining that at the last minute his editor refused to run the story without giving Arnold’s identity.”

“It is possible, I suppose,” Mack says, “that parts of his story were exaggerated; but unless you know the person, as several of us did, you cannot simply assume he was the type of person who would pull off a scam. There’s certainly no indication that in the nine years following the show [*The Men Who Killed Kennedy*] that he did anything whatsoever to capitalize on, or gain notoriety from, the experience. In fact, he turned down requests for other interviews.”

“Finally,” Mack says, responding to another common accusation, “having interviewed the late Gordon Arnold several times, and speaking with others who have also done so, there is absolutely no indication he was ‘emotionally disturbed’ at any time.”

Witness vs. Witness

If one chooses to accept Gordon Arnold’s story, however, there is another slight problem that needs to be addressed.

After the release of the Warren Report and its 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits, conspiracy theorists seized upon the testimony of Union Terminal Railroad signal supervisor S. M. Holland to prove there had been a shot fired from the grassy knoll.



Knoll witnesses S. M. Holland (left) and Gordon Arnold

At his Warren Commission deposition, Holland testified that he viewed the motorcade from the railroad bridge overlooking Elm Street, and that during the assassination, he heard four reports, three of which sounded like they came from “the upper part of the street,” towards the Texas School Book Depository, but one of which (either the third or the fourth) came “from under those trees” on the grassy knoll.

Concurrent with this report from the knoll area, he said, “a puff of smoke came out about 6 or 8 feet above the ground right out from under those trees . . . like someone had thrown a firecracker, or something out, and that is just about the way it sounded. It wasn’t as loud as the previous reports or shots.” It was “just like somebody had thrown a firecracker and left a little puff of smoke there; it was just laying there,” he told investigator Josiah Thompson two years later. “It was a white smoke; it wasn’t a black smoke or like a black powder. It was like a puff of a cigarette, but it was about nine feet off the ground.”

Holland ran “around the end of this overpass, behind the fence to see if I could see anyone up there behind the fence.” “Of course, this was this sea of cars in there and . . . [there] wasn’t an inch in there that wasn’t automobiles and I couldn’t see up in that corner. I ran on up to the corner of this fence behind the building. By the time I got there there were 12 or 15 policemen and plainclothesmen, and we looked for empty shells around there for quite a while . . .,” though none was ever found.

There was one thing Holland found suspicious, however. He testified that behind the fence, at what he estimated to be the same location as the puff of smoke he had seen, “there was a station wagon backed up toward the fence, about the third car down, and a spot, I’d say 3 foot by 2 foot, looked to me like somebody had been standing there for a long period. . . and also mud upon the bumper of that station wagon. . . . [It looked] like someone had been standing there for a long time . . . It was muddy, and you could have if you could have counted them, I imagine it would have been a hundred tracks just in that one location. . . . [There was] Mud on the bumper in two spots. . . . as if someone had cleaned their foot, or stood up on the bumper to see over the fence. . . .

Because, you couldn't very well see over it standing down in the mud, or standing on the ground . . ."

Union Terminal track supervisor Richard C. Dodd added that "there were tracks and cigarette butts laying where someone had been standing on the bumper looking over the fence."

Influential author Mark Lane used Holland as a key witness in his 1966 book *Rush to Judgment*; and Josiah Thompson did the same in his 1967 volume, *Six Seconds in Dallas*, devoting numerous pages to quotations from Holland. Holland specified to Thompson that the first, second, and fourth shots had a similar sound to them, while "the third shot was not so loud; it was like it came from a .38 pistol, compared with a high-powered rifle." The third and fourth shots, he said, were nearly simultaneous.

Holland believed that the third shot was fired from behind the stockade fence on the knoll, from the point where he the puff of smoke originated. He took both Mark Lane and Josiah Thompson to the precise location he recalled, behind the stockade fence. Thompson even found something in Mary Moorman's Polaroid that he believed to be a possible assassin

behind the stockade fence, and S. M. Holland was impressed.

“Well, now you have something here,” Holland told Thompson when he saw the enlargement. “. . . Well, do you know I think that you’re looking right down at the barrel of that gun right now!”



Left: S. M. Holland stands where he thought a shot originated

Right: An image discovered by Josiah Thompson in Mary Moorman’s Polaroid

Are there reasons to doubt S. M. Holland’s version of the assassination? Certainly; for one thing, Holland was only one of at least fourteen witnesses who viewed the motorcade from the railroad bridge, and the eyewitnesses disagreed about what happened.

While mail clerk Austin L. Miller, hostler helper Nolan H. Potter, switchman Walter Luke Winborn, and others agreed with Holland about the smoke, they and most of the other overpass witnesses heard precisely three shots and could not agree on their origin. Officer James W. Foster thought they “came from back in toward the corner of Elm and Houston Streets,” toward the Texas School Book Depository; electrician Frank E. Reilly thought they all came from the knoll; Austin Miller thought they sounded as if they came “from right there in the [President’s] car.” Nolan Potter, Walter Winborn, and hostler Curtis F. Bishop didn’t know where the shots came from.

Did a rifle on the knoll emit the puff of smoke recalled by some of the witnesses? Ever since the time of the Civil War, rifles have been virtually smokeless, and Lee Harvey Oswald’s Mannlicher-Carcano is typical in that respect. Are there other possible explanations for such smoke? Of course.

For example, S. M. Holland himself said the smoke “was like a puff of a cigarette,” and Walter Winborn also said it looked like “somebody had taken a puff off of a cigarette . . .” Richard Dodd observed “tracks and

cigarette butts” at the spot he and Holland said the smoke originated. It seems reasonable enough to suggest that a spectator behind the fence, possibly one of the men noticed by eyewitness Lee Bowers, may have been smoking.

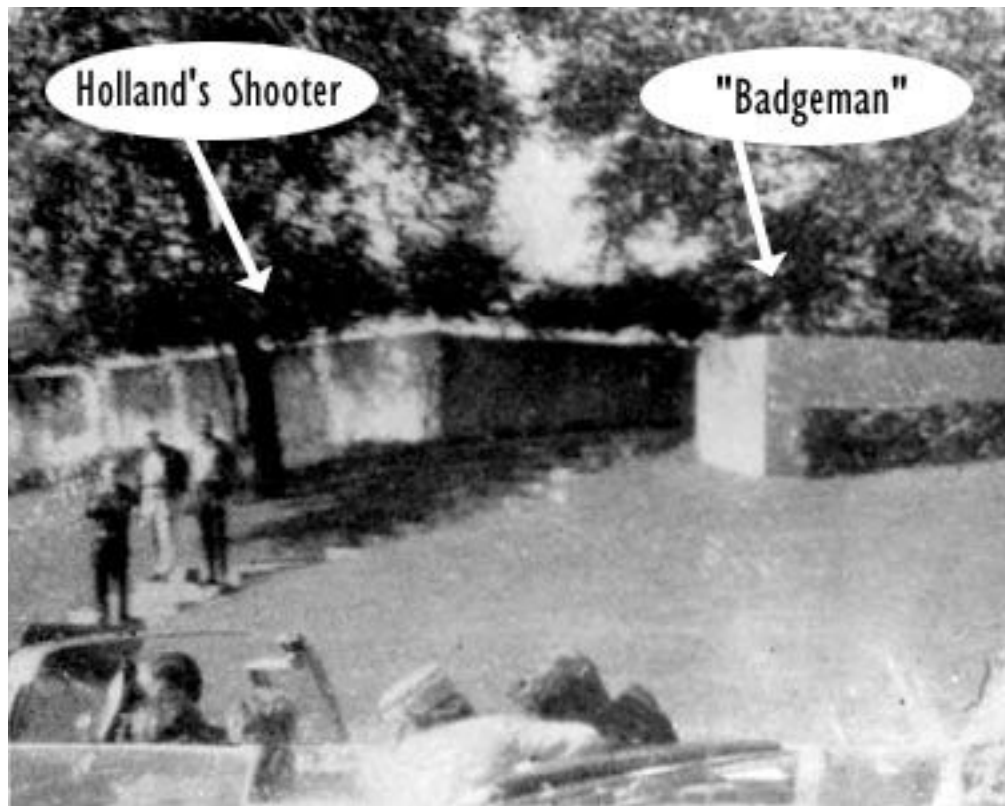
On the other hand, railroad car inspector James L. Simmons told the FBI “he thought he saw exhaust fumes of smoke near the embankment in front of the Texas School Depository Building,” and “it was his opinion the shots came from the direction of the Texas School Depository Building.”

Machinist Clemon Earl Johnson also noticed “smoke, lots of puffs of smoke,” he told researcher Larry Sneed, “but I was of the opinion that the smoke was coming out of those motorcycles. The smoke was coming up off the ground out where the motorcycles were, not on the grassy knoll. A lot of them said they saw smoke come out of the grassy knoll, but I didn’t. Maybe it’s because they were looking that way, and I was looking down on the car. But the smoke cleared up pretty quick after all the cars and motorcycles left. I’ve always thought the smoke came from those motorcycles. . . . But Holland and Dodd, if both were living today, they’d almost fight you that they saw

smoke coming from out of those bushes. They swore they were looking right at the bushes at the time. You couldn't talk to them. Those guys' heads were set." 🗨️

Despite all of this, for over a decade Holland's scenario was *the theory*, endorsed in not only *Rush to Judgment* and *Six Seconds in Dallas*, but other seminal conspiracy books like Sylvia Meagher's *Accessories after the Fact* (1967), Jim Garrison's *A Heritage of Stone* (1970), and Robert Sam Anson's *"They've Killed the President!"* (1975). 🗨️

But Gordon Arnold claimed that, not just one, but *numerous* shots came from behind the picket fence; and not where S. M. Holland specifically placed the shooter, which would have been a considerable distance to Arnold's right; but rather, the young soldier *felt* the first shot, only inches over his left shoulder: so close, he told Henry Hurt in 1982, that when the shots began, "I thought they were shooting at me"; and, as he stated even more dramatically in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, "... when a bullet goes past your ear and your eardrum feels like it's coming out the other side of your head, it's close. That's why I thought I was shot."



So if we choose to believe that there was a shooter on the grassy knoll, whose version do we believe: S. M. Holland's or Gordon Arnold's? And if one *has* to be false, what guarantee do we have that there is any truth to either one.